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AUTHOR Rutherford, Bill
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ABSTRACT

Results of a study of the efforts of three Texas school districts to develop school-based management are reported in this paper, which discusses project development and progress in implementation. Fifteen schools--2 senior high, 6 junior high/middle schools and 7 elementary schools--from three districts--one predominatly Hispanic, one suburban, and one Black/Anglo--participated in the project. The overall project sought to develop collaborative decision making as a means for achieving school improvement. At the end of the first year, a questionnaire was administered to participants and onsite interviews were conducted with administrators and teachers active in program leadership. A climate survey was administered in two districts, and interviews were conducted in one district at the end of the program's second year. No school fully implemented school-based management as originally envisioned, but most made progress toward that end. Collaborative efforts between and among faculty members within a school developed more rapidly than did faculty/campus administrator and school/district collaboration. Obstacles included vague expectations and definitions of school-based management and teachers' time constraints. The full impact of the program on school improvement was difficult to determine due to interaction with other secondary innovations. A conclusion is that collaborative decision making and school-based management are not accomplished quickly or easily. (3 references) (LMI)

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School-Based Management and School Improvement: How It Happened in Three School Districts

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Dr. Bill Rutherford
The University of Texas
College of Education, EDB 294
Austin, TX 78712

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School-Based Management and
School Improvement: How it
Happened in Three School Districts

This paper reports on the efforts of schools in three separate school districts to develop school-based management (SBM). These schools are a part of a project that began in 1988 and is still continuing. Two purposes will be addressed. The report will discuss the factors that influenced the project development and, second, the progress made in establishing school-based management in the project schools.

Study Sample

The three school districts involved in this project were in the same state but separated from each other by several hundred miles and were different in several key respects. One district encompasses three contiguous but distinct towns and serves a student population of predominantly Hispanic students. Hereinafter, this will be referred to as District 1. District 2 is located immediately adjacent to a large city and would be properly characterized as suburban school district. The final district, District 3, serves a town with a population of about 12,000 and is some distance from a large city. The student population in the latter two districts is predominantly Black and Anglo with Anglos being in the majority. The only link between these districts was the fact that they volunteered to participate in this project which was organized, facilitated and funded, in part, by a state agency. The funding was primarily for providing training.

The overall purpose of the project was to promote school improvement through the development of increased collaboration and decision-making at the school level. From a group of schools that volunteered to participate, these districts were chosen for at least two key reasons. They represented as well as any three districts could the kinds of school settings and student populations that are found within the state. Also, they had both a need and a willingness to improve student performance.

At the beginning of the project there were four junior high schools and one senior high involved from District 1 and one elementary and one intermediate school from District 2. One junior high participated in District 3. During the second project year, two elementary schools entered the project in District 1. In District 2 a senior high school, a junior high school and three elementary school joined the project. District 3 remained at one school. At the close of Year Two there were 15 schools in the project, two senior highs, six junior highs and/or middle schools and seven elementary schools. Personnel in these schools included approximately 610 teachers and 29 campus administrators.

Project Objectives

The overall goal of this project was to develop collaborative decision-making as a means of accomplishing school improvement in each school. within this framework four objectives were established:

1. To enhance the campus administrators role as instructional leader through the campus collegial team concept.
2. The campus development teams (principals, department heads, select teachers, district office personnel) will work together to promote teaching and learning.
3. Campus principals and central office personnel will serve as facilitators and support staff for department heads and select teachers.
4. Department heads and teachers will understand and apply peer coaching skills.

Data Collection

Data were collected during the first and second years in three ways. A questionnaire was used to assess participant perceptions of progress in meeting each of the four objectives. Written comments were solicited to explain their questionnaire ratings. In addition to quantitative data and comments from the questionnaires, onsite interviews were conducted with campus administrators and with those teachers in each school who were members of the campus planning or campus development teams that had initial leadership responsibility for the school's movement toward SBM. Typically these development committees were composed of department or grade level chairpersons and some selected teachers.

At the end of the second year a climate survey was developed and administered. This instrument and the questionnaires seeking information related to project objectives were used in Districts 1 and 2. Interviews only were used to collect data in District 3. This was done at the request of the leaders in the one involved school in the district.

Factors Influencing the Project

Before presenting specific findings from this project it is necessary to understand some of the factors that operated across the three districts and within districts. In some cases there was evidence that suggested a relationship between these factors and project development and outcomes. Other factors had the potential for influencing the project but relationships were not immediately clear.

Following the description of these factors will be a presentation of the findings across and within districts.

Factors Common Across Districts

SBM is typically not an end goal in a school or a district. It is seen as a step in the process of bringing about school improvement. Consequently, SBM, which itself represents a complex innovation, is usually accompanied by one or more innovations that are specific to some aspect(s) of school improvement. Glickman (1990) reported on four schools that were attempting to implement SBM. In those schools, collectively there were at least 10 separate innovations that were being implemented in connection with SBM.

When several related innovations are being implemented at the same time it can create complications. For one thing it makes it difficult, if not impossible, to attribute outcomes to a particular innovation. Also, it makes it much more difficult to effectively implement any one innovation when several are active within the school at the same time. These problems were evident in this project. Along with the organization of the schools into committees and councils, it was intended that teachers in departments or grade levels would begin to work together more closely on instructional matters and that they would engage in peer coaching on a regular basis. As it turned out progress in meeting the peer coaching objective (objective 4 above) was slower and more difficult than was true for the other three objectives. Futhermore, the matter of peer coaching was threatening to many faculty members and actually worked against SBM for it created suspicions among faculty members which made collaboration more difficult.

The school in District 3 elected to give serious attention to the effective schools instructional factors (Lezotte and Bancroft, 1985; Edmonds, 1982). In connection with this approach, extreme emphasis was given to the preparation of students for the state mandated assessment tests. It seemed to the personnel in the school and to this evaluator that the emphasis on test preparation was the crucial element in the significant increases in test scores that the school attained during the course of the project. The test preparation effort was clearly enhanced as a systematic, total school effort by the collaboration that was

generated in response to the project initiative. In this sense it can be claimed that SBM did contribute to school improvement in an identifiable way.

While this school seemed to benefit from attention to the effective schools model they found peer coaching to be so disruptive that it was set aside as an objective.

SBM is a complex innovation, so complex it was difficult to give it a precise definition or description. It was also difficult for participants to know "when they were doing it." Glickman (1990) states that one of the ironies of empowerment is that "the more an empowered school improves, the more apparent it is that there's more to be improved" (p. 70). During the interviews conducted as a part of the evaluation, many comments were made or questions asked that indicated the participants were seeking some type of benchmarks or standards that might be used to assess their progress, to tell them if they are doing what they should be.

Perhaps some ambiguity about the definition or description of SBM is necessary and may even be desirable. But this study reveals, that ambiguity can negatively influence development of SBM. In the absence of clarity, schools and individuals arrived at their own definitions of the programs. Some department chairs believed that the essence of SBM was to be more diligent in getting the opinions of departments members on issues related to that department. Leadership councils in some schools believed that SBM granted, or should grant, them the privilege of making decisions that were typically made outside of the school at the district level. Others had perceptions of SBM that fell in between these extremes. These variations in understanding of SBM made it more difficult to facilitate it and it increased the difficulty of establishing a common language and set of expectations that were shared within and across schools.

Collaborative decision making cannot happen unless people think, plan, and work together. This takes time, much more time than the participants in this project had envisioned. This time had to be added to already busy workdays for no provisions were made to provide release time from assigned duties. Rather quickly the participants began to emphatically express their concerns about the time that was being required of them. This concern persisted throughout the two years of this study although it diminished somewhat for schools that participated for both years. In those schools that had the most advanced development of SBM some teachers claimed that their teaching effectiveness was being diminished because they had less time to prepare for instruction. The time demand came not just from the collaborative effort but from the demands of the associated innovations mentioned above.

All schools in this project approached SBM in two common ways. They encouraged the development or improvement of collaborative efforts within departments or grade levels with these units as the focal point for collaboration. From these departmental or grade level units there were chosen representatives who formed a schoolwide committee or council. Issues affecting the school as a whole were the focal point at this level. Those persons who had key responsibilities at both levels were especially concerned about the time issue. Time did not seem to be a particular problem for those who had no direct leadership role at either level.

Factors Within Districts

There were several factors that varied within the districts that had potential for influencing how the project developed and progressed.

Starting point - District 1 began with junior and senior high schools and added elementary schools in year two. District 2 actually began with one elementary school prior to the formal beginning of the project. When the project began a second school was added. It was an intermediate school that served grades 5 and 6 only. During the second year a junior and senior high school and several other elementary schools were included in the

project. Only one school, a junior high, was involved throughout the project in District 3. As will be seen in the findings section, project progress seemed to have some relationship to grade levels served by the school.

District level support - A new superintendent joined District 3 at the time the project was initiated. He had only limited involvement in the decision to engage the district in the project. During this first year he sanctioned the project but was not actively supportive. By the second year he was more aware and verbally supportive of the project effort but he had other priorities. There were no other persons in the district office who had an assignment that would cause them to support or interfere with the project.

The superintendent in District 2 strongly supported the project and made this clear within the district. However, the district office coordinator who had the responsibility for facilitating the project throughout the district seemed to have no real commitment to it.

In District 1 the superintendent gave tacit approval to the project but no real visible support. Instead, he turned project responsibility over to a district office curriculum coordinator and an assistant superintendent. These two persons had an absolute and active commitment to the project.

Responsibility for facilitation - While support for the project at the highest levels differed, the effects of these differences were obscured by the fact that in each district there was strong facilitation of the project by persons other than the superintendent. Particularly interesting was the manner in which the project was facilitated in the three districts.

In District 1, one curriculum coordinator in the district office and an assistant superintendent worked together as facilitators. They promoted the project from the outset and they worked long and hard during the two year project period to promote it. They not only worked with the involved schools they worked with other district office personnel to develop understanding and support of the project.

These facilitators attempted to strengthen the commitment and contribution of the district office by designing the project so there would be a representative from the district office on the campus leadership committee on every campus. Unfortunately, they were not able to deliver on this promise, for a variety of reasons, and the campus committees viewed that negatively.

The project in District 2 actually evolved out of the efforts of one elementary school. Prior to the formal beginning of the project, the principal had gone a long way toward developing grade level teaming in the school and collaborative decision-making within the teams. This project was the impetus to strengthen SBM by bringing teachers together across teams, by enlarging the scope of decisions to be made and by including staff and parents in the collaboration. This school then became "a model school" in the district for SBM and this campus administrator became the key spokesman for SBM within the district.

This situation had its good points and bad points. The greatest advantage was the existence of a school that was available to observe and people engaged in the process with whom to consult. But the school principal had neither the time nor the formal assignment to be the designated facilitator for the district so she was able to serve other schools in only limited ways and no one else in the district emerged as a strong facilitator. In a sense the school and principal became project facilitators through distance modeling and this was less than ideal.

The other school that participated in the project in Year One served grades 5 and 6 only. In previous years the school had been a junior high schools as it was coping with the change from a junior high at the same time it was attempting to develop SBM. During the first year the intermediate school sent representatives over to meet with the "model school" once a week when they had a meeting of their development team. Still they felt they were just learners and not really active participants in SBM. Because of this, questionnaire data

was not collected in the school during year one. It is important to note that the intermediate school did try to take advantage of what they could learn from the model school. However, other schools in the district did not choose to do this in any systematic way.

From his research Glickman (1980) arrived at two conclusions that apply, at least in part, to District 2. "The more an empowered school becomes a model of success, the less the school becomes a practical model to be imitated by other schools" (p. 71). "The more an empowered school is recognized for its success, the more non-empowered schools criticize it" (p.71). Development of SBM had been underway in the "model school" for some years prior to the project beginning. It had progressed to the point where other schools that were just beginning felt somewhat threatened and even defeated when they thought that they were expected to quickly become like that school. As a consequence, a degree of resentment of the model school began to build among some new project schools.

The facilitator in District 3 was a teacher within the project school. This teacher was a very energetic, capable and forward-looking individual. She had delivered staff development programs to educators across the state and to the agency who gave support to this project. The teacher felt the project would benefit their school and with the able assistance of the state official they were able to get the school to participate. Any teacher who is the facilitator, not to mention the initiator, of SBM is automatically subject to double jeopardy. That teacher is under scrutiny from the administration and from fellow teachers. In spite of this, this teacher and school did make progress.

Any innovation that is to succeed must be skillfully and intentionally facilitated. In each of the three districts this type of facilitation was present. The impact of facilitation was most apparent in District 2. There you had the "model school" and its very skillful facilitator but across the district as a whole facilitation was weak. Consequently, development of SBM was more uneven among schools than in District 1 with a like number of schools but with effective facilitation across the schools from the district office.

Tasks Undertaken - All districts had school improvement and collaborative decision-making as a goal. District 1 coupled that goal with a strong emphasis on peer coaching in the belief that through that activity both classroom instruction and collaboration would be advanced. District 2 also gave attention to peer coaching but they stressed even more the development of departmental and grade level teaming as steps to goal attainment. District 3 did not attempt peer coaching and did not actively promote department level teaming. The emphasis in this distict was on schoolwide collaboration to identify and propose solutions to schoolwide problems, especially low test scores. Of course, the other two districts also gave attention to schoolwide problems but not with the same degree of intensity.

It would not be proper to refer to the different task arrangements as better than or worse than, just different than. It seemed to this evaluator, based on very soft data, the schools in Districts 1 and 2 were making more progress in working together collaboratively as faculty units than District 3 but were not making as much progress in attacking some schoolwide problems through collaborative decision making.

FINDINGS

Within District Findings

Quantitate data was collected only in District 1 and 2. Data from those two districts that relate to the four project objectives are presented below. The project objectives are restated here for the reader's convenience.

Objective 1	The campus administrator will be enhanced as instructional leader.
Objective 2	The campus development teams (department heads, select teachers, district office personnel) will promote teaching and learning.
Objective 3	Campus principals and district office personnel will serve as facilitators and support staff for department heads and select teachers.
Objective 4	Department heads and select teachers will understand and apply peer coaching skills at the campus level.

Data for the schools in District 1 that participated in the project both years are shown in Table 1. Several salient observations can be drawn from these data.

Table 1 goes here

Given that the questionnaire offered a five-point response scale, with five being high, scores above 3.00 are on the positive side of the ledger. In Year One, eight of the cells show positive ratings and four cells reflect limited progress. Ratings in all cells for Year Two are in the positive range. These second year data indicate that the teachers and administrators were feeling more positive toward the project objectives than they were in Year One. Interview data confirmed this finding. Participants in the second year felt that the collaborative efforts were easier and more rewarding than in Year One. Even so, the ratings were, with one exception, in the 3.00-4.00 range which indicates there is still much progress yet to be made in meeting the four objectives.

Both in Year One and Year Two there is a fairly consistent pattern in the ratings. Junior high teachers rate their progress higher than senior high teachers and the campus administrators fall in between the two teacher groups. It is not surprising that the junior high teachers are more positive than the senior high teachers for the numbers in junior high schools and departments are smaller which makes collaboration easier. One department in the senior high was comprised of 22 teachers, a number greater than the entire faculty in some elementary schools.

Comparisons of administrator ratings with teacher ratings in Year Two offer some interesting findings. Teachers feel more progress is being made in developing the campus administrator as an instructional leader than do the administrators. There is no clear explanation of this but comments made in interviews suggested that the administrators judged themselves to be instructional leaders prior to the project so they may have felt not much progress was needed. Also, the project placed demands on them that complicated their work and may have made them feel less effective.

During Year Two, two elementary schools in District 1 joined the project. One school (School One) already had a lot of collaboration underway at the time. In the second school (School Two) it was immediately apparent in the interviews that the development team or council felt there was not much collaboration in their school. Furthermore, they believed that their principal was not really interested in teachers sharing in the decisions made within the school.

Ratings of the four objectives in these two schools are shown in Table 2. Not only do the teachers in School Two rate progress for each objective significantly lower than School One, their ratings indicate that less than average progress was being made in that school.

Table 2 goes here

A similar phenomenon was noted in District 2. During the second year of the project three elementary schools were added to the project. Interviews in these schools indicated some collaborative efforts in the three schools but they seemed to be among teachers moreso than teacher/administrator collaboration. Data from District 2 are shown in Table 3.

The Year Two data offers a comparison across the four elementary schools and the intermediate school.

Table 3 goes here

On the ratings for all objectives the "model school" rated progress higher than the intermediate school but both rated much higher than the three elementary schools that entered the project in Year Two. On all objectives the three new schools felt progress was limited and this was especially true for objectives 3 and 4. Ratings for these last two objectives are lower across all schools than ratings of the first two objectives.

There is no absolute explanation for these ratings but when they are considered in relation to the District 1 ratings and with interview data some explanations seem viable.

To develop SBM in schools where some collaboration is already underway is easier than in schools where existing collaboration between teachers and administrators is limited seems apparent from these data.

The relatively low rating of progress for Objective 3 was directed more at the lack of visible support from the district office than lack of support from the campus administrator. However, interview data, as well as individual school data, revealed some definite differences in teacher's perceptions of their principal's support for SBM and their efforts in the process. Including district office personnel as a part of SBM on the individual campuses was not, in hindsight, a wise decision. While it is true that ideally SBM would include collaborative decision-making between district office and local schools, it was impractical to assume that could or would occur early in the development of SBM in this district.

Objective 4 refers to peer coaching, a companion innovation in this project. The ratings of limited progress in meeting this objective shows that it was a difficult objective to obtain. Without exception, interview data from every school in both districts confirmed this. Teachers expressed more concerns abut peer coaching than any other aspect of the program. If and when peer coaching is fully implemented it certainly may make a significant contribution to school improvement and SBM but during the first two years it was not aiding collaboration. In District 3 peer coaching was not even attempted because the idea created so much anxiety among the faculty.

The influence of support and facilitation for the innovation is evident in the questionnaire data. School One in District 1 and the "model school" in District 2 both had principals that believed in and promoted collaboration and it is reflected in the higher ratings of project objectives. The support at the campus level did not seem to differ greatly in School Two in District 1 and the three new elementary schools in District 2. That support might best be described as passive. Ratings in these schools were lower than for the two schools with strong principal support.

Ratings from the intermediate school are not particularly high, yet given the circumstances they are higher than might be expected. The first project year was the year the school changed from a junior high to an intermediate school. This required numerous changes including faculty changes. At the end of the first year the principal retired so there was a new campus administrator for the second year. Had it not been for those teachers who participated with the "model school" and acted as facilitators within the school the progress of this school would surely have been even less.

Questionnaire data were collected from a junior and senior high school in District 2 that entered the project in Year Two. There were some problems with this data so it is not presented but the data along with interviews revealed that the junior high participants felt they were making good progress while the high school was very guarded in its assessment of progress. It was also evident in the interviews that the junior high administrators believed in SBM and supported its development while the senior high administrators were questioning the project.

The ratings of the "model school" in District 2 for Years One and Two have implications for this project and others who would implement SBM. This was a school with a school principal who sincerely promoted collaboration and who was highly respected by the faculty. Collaboration among teachers and between teachers and principals was evident at the time the project began. In spite of this strong beginning, ratings of progress by the teachers is not especially high and either dropped or advanced very little from Year One to Year Two. This is a clear indication of how difficult it is to develop SBM. As the participants in this school became involved in the project and became formally acquainted with SBM and what it could be ideally, the more they realized how much they needed to do. As they got more involved in collaborative decision-making within the school the more they wanted to have collaboration with the district office. This was not happening and is reflected in their lowered rating for objective 3 in Year Two. Glickman (1990) found in his study that the more progress a school makes the more it is aware of progress yet to be made. This appeared to be true in this school.

The comparatively high ratings of progress assigned by School One in District 1 are explainable in two ways. The principal, who was highly respected by the faculty, encouraged collaboration before the project began and that contributed to their perceptions of progress. Secondly, they were not yet in complete contact with the objectives of the project. For example, they seemed unaware of the expectation that district office personnel were to be involved in SBM so all of their ratings related to their principal and internal decisions only. Also, they had not really engaged in peer coaching as intended by the project and assessed that objective on the basis of routine collaboration they believed to be peer coaching.

In some ways it might be claimed that over the two years of this study the greatest progress was made in the one school in District 3. Student gains on achievement were impressive and even earned them an honor within the state. No other schools in the study made such gains. (It should be pointed out that student achievement was not included in project objectives and the only information on this issue came to the evaluator informally.) The degree of collaboration and shared decision-making within the school increased greatly during the project.

Several factors seemed to contribute to the gains made in District 3. In both areas of achievement and collaboration the starting point for the school was relatively low so there was much room for improvement. The school was the only one in the district involved in the project so it had a certain amount of autonomy that schools in the other districts did not. For this reason it was easier for them to set aside the peer coaching activity that was attempted in schools in the other districts. In lieu of that they focused directly and specifically on improving test scores, the only project school that did it with that level of intensity.

Consistent and effective facilitation from that teacher facilitator was a major contributing factor to the progress made in this school. This facilitator was very sensitive to the feeling of all faculty members and as such was able to "hold things together" and keep progress underway at the same time. The facilitator was also successful in gaining the confidence of the campus administrator and his verbal support for the effort.

Findings Across Districts

At the end of the Year Two of the project a climate survey developed for this project was administered to project participants in District 1 and 2. On this survey there were four items that specifically asked for the perceived value or contribution of SBM. The participants were to rate each item on scale of five points with 5 being high. In Table 4 the four items are shown with the combined mean scores for all schools that were in the project both years.

Given that 3.00 was midpoint on the scale, all of the means except one are on the positive side of the scale. In both districts the administrators tended to rate the items higher that the teachers which indicates differing perceptions of project development. Teachers in District 2 rated the items higher than their counterparts in District 1. However, the reverse was true for the administrators. There was no apparent explanation for this rating pattern.

The lowest ratings in both districts went to the item on collaboration with the district office and the highest went to collaboration among faculty members. Collaboration between faculty and campus administration fell in between. Another comparison of interest is that ratings on the items for collaboration within the faculty (#1) and between faculty and administration (#2) are rated higher than the item asking about project contribution to job satisfaction (#4).

Collectively these data indicate the developmental nature of SBM. Development of collaboration among faculty members precedes, and may be a prerequisite to, development of meaningful collaboration and decision making between faculty and administrators. Until a school can establish SBM in a functional manner it is likely to be difficult to develop collaborative relations with district office personnel. It should be noted, that the personnel in the project schools claimed they sought more collaboration with the district office but the district office did not reach out to them eagerly. No doubt district office personnel will find it at least as difficult, and probably moreso, to engage in collaborative decision-making than do local schools. Those who have the most power have the most to lose if decision making is really shared throughout the district.

Another developmental feature of SBM is that in the early stages it is likely to have more positive impact on the organization (improved collaboration) than on individuals in terms of job satisfaction. If the developmental process unfolds as intended and expected for SBM, at some point in time personal job satisfaction should rise to a high level.

When the qualitative data is considered in connection with the quantitative, several tentative findings are supported. The more the teachers became involved in collaboration with their peers the more they expressed satisfaction and gratification with their collaborative efforts. In those schools where collaboration was neither systematic or common, the mere act of collaborating seemed to be more important to the participants than collaboration for the sake of schoolwide decision making. Teachers reported that they felt they were doing a better job and the school was better as a result of their collaborative efforts. This suggests that collaboration is a worthy goal for schools even if it is not associated with a movement such as SBM.

After two years there was no common definition or description of SBM. No two schools described it in the same way. The absence of a clear definition provided a certain comfort zone for the schools for it meant they were never doing it wrong. But it also created some frustration because they did not know if and when they were doing it right. It is virtually impossible to evaluate an innovation if there are no parameters to identify it and it is also difficult to facilitate it. Based on the experience of this project it would seem that implementation of SBM would be enhanced if the innovation had a more certain definition and that this could be done without removing the flexibility that schools and districts want.

The principal in the local school has great influence over the development of SBM in his/her school. Those principals who were judged by district personnel to be effective instructional leaders supported and promoted SBM and already had it underway to some extent prior to the project beginning. Those principals who were judged less effective (ranging to ineffective) were verbally supportive of SBM but they used all kinds of subtle, and some not so subtle, tactics to delay its development. If SBM is to be a means for strengthening school leadership as a step toward school improvement, then it may be necessary to somehow work around those principals who are providing the weak leadership.

An encouraging finding related to this issue of leadership was that even the weaker principals were willing to permit, and to some extent encourage, collaboration among

faculty members as long as it did not influence their base of authority. As a result of this peer collaboration, faculties began to feel better about their school and to have a heightened interest in decisions that influenced the school as a whole. Perhaps it is possible that faculties can develop collaborative decision-making to a certain extent even when the principal does not support it. Whether SBM can fully develop without principal support and cooperation is problematic.

Finally, if SBM is to develop in schools there must be one or more persons who actively facilitate the effort and it must have, at least, the sanction of the district administration. The ideal combination for implementing SBM is strong support at the district level and a strong facilitator at the school level. The weaker the support is at either level the less likely it is that SBM will actually become a meaningful, productive process in the school.

Summary

For two years three school districts were studied as they attempted to implement collaborative decision making in connection with their movement toward school based management. The project began with a total of eight schools and during the second year seven more joined the project.

The impetus for this project came from a state agency. The agency provided funding to support the training of personnel in the districts and an independent evaluation by this writer, who had no connections with the agency or the districts. The ultimate purpose was to promote school improvement in the individual schools and it was believed that development of collaborative decision making, and ultimately SBM, at the school and district level would lead to the desired improvement.

Four specific objectives were established for the project. The focus of the evaluation study was the progress that was being made toward achieving the objectives and on factors that seem to influence project development. Data were collected through questionnaires, personal interviews, and written comments.

No school in this project fully implemented SBM as they envisioned it, but most made some progress toward that end. Movement toward implementation of SBM appears to be developmental. Collaborative efforts between and among faculty members within a school developed more rapidly than did collaborative efforts between faculty and campus administrators. Collaboration between schools and the district office developed even more slowly. As with most developmental processes, the stages were not mutually exclusive but they overlapped. The findings also indicate that teacher's personal job satisfaction resulting from the collaborative efforts did not progress as quickly as within school collaboration did.

It was not possible in this project to determine the impact of SBM on school improvement. In the first place it was not fully implemented in any school. Secondly, it did not evolve alone but in connection with at least one other innovation. The collaborative decision making that did occur acted as a catalyst for the identification of school improvement needs and to the development of possible responses to those needs. These responses resulted in the creation of another innovation and the impact of the secondary innovation(s) could not be distinguished from the impact of the collaborative efforts. It seems highly unlikely that any school that moves to SBM will continue to do business as usual for the reason for SBM is to join all members of a school together in a collective pursuit of ways to improve the school and its outcomes. Thus it seems inevitable that SBM will develop in association with one or more innovations. In this particular project there was evidence that the related innovation had positive effect on the development of SBM and school improvement in some schools but in others the influence was negative.

At the end of two years there was no common understanding of what SBM really was or would be or how the schools were to know if they were engaging in SBM as was expected.

SBM is a concept and as such it seems difficult to define or describe. This vagueness creates problems for the implementation process.

Teachers in the project reported that they believed there was more collaboration ongoing in their school as a result of the project. They also expressed the belief that the school was better because of it although there were no concrete or measurable indicators of the improvement in most schools.

The matter of time was the greatest problem the teachers perceived in developing their collaborative efforts on the way to SBM. They felt their days were already filled with responsibilities related to teaching and it was a sacrifice to allocate more time to the meetings required for collaborative decision making. Gaining cooperation of department and grade level chairpersons and teachers was most frequently expressed as a problem by campus administrators.

Outcomes from this project suggest that collaborative decision-making and SBM are worthy goals to be pursued but they are not accomplished quickly or easily.

A Final Note

In this report and in the project schools the terms school-based management and collaborative decision-making are used in a seemingly interchangeable manner. It should be noted that collaborative decision-making is an essential component of SBM but at an optimum level SBM involves much more than that. The two concepts are not interchangeable. Additionally, it should be recognized that school-based management is a misleading term to describe what most schools seem to want from the restructuring process. The degree of autonomy and responsibility individual schools have for managing their affairs is directly and significantly influenced by relationships with the district office. Schools that anticipate they will completely manage their own affairs independent of the district office will likely be disappointed.

TABLE 1
Progress in Meeting Project Objectives-
District 1, Two-Year Schools
Mean Scores

Objective	Year One			Year Two		
	Junior High Teachers	Senior High Teachers	Jr. & Sr. High Administrators	Junior High Teachers	Senior High Teachers	Jr & Sr High Administrators
1	3.10	2.65	2.90	3.79	3.18	3.10
2	3.44	3.20	3.25	3.68	3.18	3.80
3	3.50	3.00	3.20	3.60	3.09	4.25
4	2.90	2.65	3.00	3.68	3.18	3.25

TABLE 2
Progress in Meeting Project Objectives
District 1, Year Two Schools
Mean Scores

Objective	Elementary School One Teachers	Elementary School Two Teachers
1	4.50	3.00
2	3.50	2.00
3	4.50	2.00
4	3.75	2.75

TABLE 3
Progress in Meeting Project Objectives
District 2, Year One and Year Two Schools
Mean Scores

Objective	Year One		Year Two		
	"Model" Elementary School Teachers	Intermediate School Teachers	"Model" Elementary School Teachers	Intermediate School Teachers	Three Elementary Schools New to Project Teachers
1	4.00	No Data	4.20	3.40	2.66
2	3.80	No Data	3.90	3.00	2.16
3	3.60	No Data	3.10	2.00	1.00
4	3.00	No Data	3.20	2.77	1.00

TABLE 4
Responses to Selected Responses on the
Attitude Survey Mean Scores

	District 1		District 2	
	Teachers	Campus Administrators	Teachers	Campus Administrators
1. The Project has contributed to increased collaboration among school faculty members	3.81	4.53	4.36	4.40
2. The Project has contributed to increased collaboration between faculty and administration.	3.37	4.60	3.92	4.16
3. Collaboration between central office personnel and schools has increased as a result of the Project	2.86	3.80	3.44	3.72
4. The Project has made a positive contribution to my job satisfaction	3.35	4.40	3.66	4.16

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